

Wellness Program Participation Lagging?

6 STEPS FOR CREATING A
HEALTHIER WORKPLACE

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How can you improve wellness program participation at your company?

More than two-thirds of U.S. employers offer workplace wellness programs as part of their employee benefits packages, up from 58 percent in 2008.¹

Improving wellness program participation, however, is a challenge for most HR leaders and wellness program managers. Median participation rates range from 20 percent to 59 percent, according to a study sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor.² While employee incentives are extremely effective, the most successful programs are those that take a comprehensive approach to strategically integrate wellness as part of the corporate culture.

This guide presents a six-step framework for building a strategy to improve wellness program participation at your company.

MEDIAN WELLNESS PROGRAM PARTICIPATION RATES²

20% Programs without incentives

40% Programs with incentives

59% Comprehensive programs



1. 2015 Workplace Wellness Study, Society for Human Resources Management.
2. Workplace Wellness Programs Research Report by Rand Corporation for the U.S. Department of Labor.

1 Build your business case for the benefits of a healthier workplace

The business case for encouraging employees to lead healthier lifestyles is clear. Unhealthy behaviors do more than drive up healthcare costs; they impact absenteeism, productivity, engagement and performance. Lost productivity costs can be 2.3 times higher than medical and pharmacy costs.³

How does senior management see your company's wellness program? Is it viewed simply as an add-on to the benefits package or as a strategic initiative essential to long-term success?

Educate your leadership team about the business benefits of a healthier workplace. Get the investment, commitment and active support you need to make wellness an important part of your company's culture and employee value proposition.

PARTICIPATION BENEFITS

- Lower long-term healthcare costs
- Reduced employee health risks
- More competitive health benefits

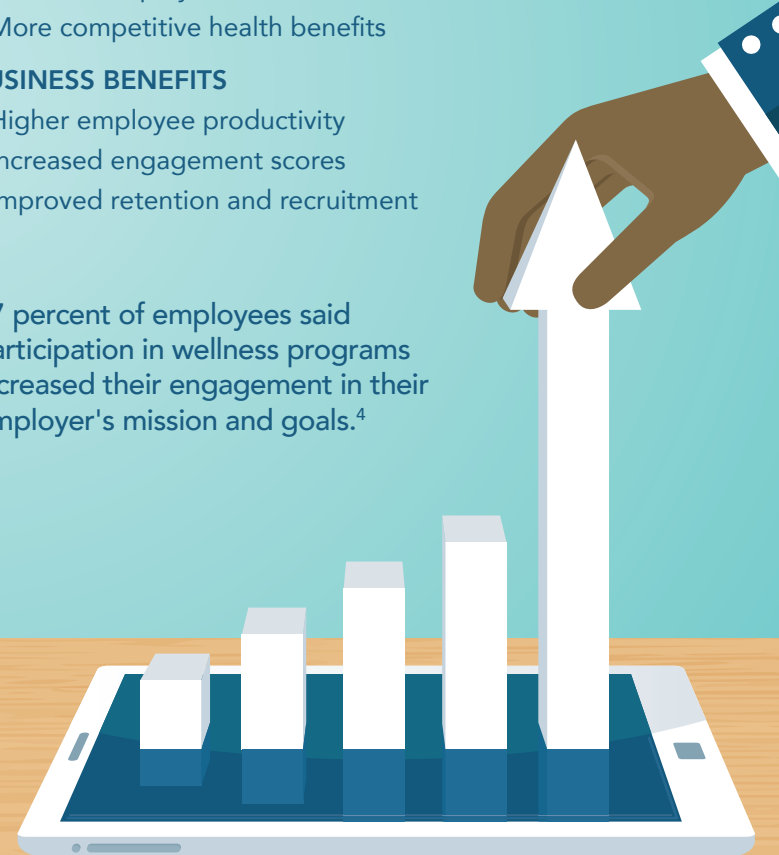
BUSINESS BENEFITS

- Higher employee productivity
- Increased engagement scores
- Improved retention and recruitment

67 percent of employees said participation in wellness programs increased their engagement in their employer's mission and goals.⁴

3. R Loeppke et al, Health and Productivity as a Business Strategy, Journal of Occupational and Employment Medicine.

4. The Wellness Effect: The Impact of Workplace Programs, by Humana and The Economist Intelligence Unit.



2 Learn why more of your employees aren't participating in your program

Once you have management support for program improvement, it is essential to understand why employees do and don't participate in your wellness initiative. Utilize quantitative (surveys) and qualitative (focus group interviews) research to better understand employee perceptions.

Listed below are common reasons cited for participating—and not participating—in company wellness programs. Your research results will help identify both positive motivators to use in program communications and opportunities for change that can lead to increased participation levels.

REASONS FOR PARTICIPATING:

- Improve my health
- Maintain my health
- Learn more about my health risks
- Convenience
- Win incentive awards
- Reduce my premiums

REASONS FOR NOT PARTICIPATING:

- Don't know enough about the program benefits
- Can make changes on my own
- Not enough time
- I'm already healthy
- Inconvenient
- Concerns about confidentiality

3

Establish a wellness working group that represents your entire workforce

Grassroots involvement, support and championing are critical to the success of your workplace wellness initiatives.

Rather than centralizing decision-making for wellness program improvements within the HR department, establish a working group that represents the demographic and geographic diversity of your corporate culture.

Empower the working group with responsibility to develop, oversee and implement specific changes, improvements and additions to your program. The sense of ownership and pride that comes with such shared responsibility will lead to a more dynamic, relevant and engaging program that resonates with more of your employees.



4 Get creative by adding engaging incentives, resources and activities

Armed with senior leadership support, insights from participating and non-participating employees, and a grassroots working group to help develop and implement improvements, you are now ready to make changes that will improve participation in your company's wellness program.

A wellness program isn't something you can plan and then forget about. Your program should include a variety of different components designed or customized to work within your company culture and achieve your goals. Use the ideas below as discussion starters to make your program more meaningful, engaging and fun.



INCENTIVES & REWARDS

Consider adding a points-based rewards program to recognize individual and team achievements (see next page for additional information).



EDUCATION & TRAINING

Make wellness fun and interactive by utilizing a digital platform that caters to the way people wish to consume information today, with mobile and social touch-points.



SPECIAL EVENTS

Create worksite wellness events, such as walks, healthy recipe contests and online challenges, to inspire employees of all physical abilities to maintain their health.

Launch a persistent and authentic wellness communications program

One of the leading causes of non-participation in corporate wellness programs is lack of awareness. Making wellness initiatives a part of your workplace culture will require a well-planned and coordinated communications campaign. Enlist the ongoing support of your company's marketing and communications experts, but be sure to establish your working group as the "client" in overseeing and approving campaigns.

Creating your company's own wellness brand will help ensure consistency for your communications campaign. Make sure to leverage digital and social touch-points along with conventional venues such as the company intranet, newsletter, workplace posters and email campaigns. It is critical, however, that your communications clearly and simply answer the WIIFM (what's in it for me) question. Celebrating employee and team successes and featuring employee wellness champions will help make your communications more authentic and engaging.

WELLNESS COMMUNICATIONS TIPS:

- Create your own wellness brand
- Be authentic and engaging
- Leverage mobile and social touch-points
- Celebrate employee success
- Feature employee wellness champions
- Be consistent and persistent
- Get stakeholder feedback



Recognize and reward achievements to keep employees engaged

Recognizing and rewarding people for their participation in wellness initiatives are powerful tools to improve participation.

While financial incentives are often included with third-party health insurance programs, points-based reward systems have grown in popularity and are now used by 25% of organizations to reward employees for participation in wellness activities (up over 50% from 2014).⁵

A 2016 survey by the Washington-based National Business Group on Health found that rewards were an important motivator for 98 percent of employees under the age of 35 and for 85 percent of employees over the age of 55. Peer recognition is also important, as 86 percent of employees said their colleagues were important motivators for improving health and wellbeing in the workplace.

Given the importance of incentives as part of a comprehensive wellness program, it's no surprise that the value of incentive budgets per person increased by 17% from 2015 to 2016.⁵



RECOGNIZE AND REWARD INDIVIDUALS AND TEAMS FOR:

- Participation in wellness programs or activities like employee challenges
- Specific achievements, such as reducing body mass index (BMI) or quitting smoking for an extended period
- Successful completion of plan components, such as online video courses

5. 8th Annual Wellness in the Workplace Study, Optum.

About O'Brien Incentives

O'Brien Corp. offers a variety of programs that drive engagement through recognition, including:

- Sales Incentives/Recognition
- Customer and Brand Loyalty Recognition
- Employee Recognition
- Performance
- Wellness
- Safety
- Length of Service

We offer the only recognition and rewards platform that includes a vast library of wellness content and tools for managing program success. The platform is easy to use and implement, and enables you to encourage healthy behaviors and engage your employees with a highly interactive solution that rewards participation and complements existing wellness programs.

For more information, visit obriencorp.com

